United Nations A/C.2/56/SR.13

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
3 December 2001
English
Original: French

Second Committee

Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 22 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Djumala (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Indonesia)

Contents

Statement by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD

Agenda item 98: Environment and sustainable development

(f) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind

Agenda item 103: Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

01-59437 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Seixas da Costa (Portugal), Mr. Djumala (Indonesia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Statement by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD

1. **Mr. Ricupero** (Secretary-General of UNCTAD) said that he wished to address not only the impact of the current economic slowdown on developing countries, but also the links between the new international situation and development prospects.

2. It was important to distinguish between the economic slowdown and the disruptions that had taken place internationally since the 11 September attack, which, while connected, were two different phenomena. The economic slowdown had already begun before the terrorist attacks, which had simply aggravated the situation. The economic slowdown was the most pronounced in 30 years. Whereas previous crises had affected only certain industrial countries, the current one was a major, simultaneous and universal slowdown.

3. The unprecedented brutality of the attacks of 11 September had elicited energetic responses in most industrial countries. In the economic sphere, the massive injection of liquidity into the system had helped save the core and restore confidence. In a coordinated or simultaneous effort, the central banks of more than 14 countries had lowered their interest rates. The United States had lost no time in releasing funds to assist those industries most severely affected. In view of the efficacy of those interventions, it was likely that the economic recovery would be more rapid and that it would be sound. Clearly, it was difficult to say when it would take place but, since the response of the United States and other major industrial countries had averted a catastrophe, namely the collapse of the international financial system, the situation in the medium term was not a great source of concern.

4. Developing countries, however, were also victims of the events of 11 September, and one of the lessons to be learned was the need to mobilize the international community to act with the same energy and rapidity in favour of development. In the aftermath of the 11 September attacks, the imbalance between advanced and developing countries was flagrant. The latter rarely had the necessary budgetary resources to assist their industries. Many countries had little leeway if they were to keep the commitments made to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Those in charge of the international organizations concerned, in particular IMF and the World Bank, being aware of the existing dangers and the need to act quickly, must therefore make use of all available financial mechanisms to come to those countries' assistance. Unfortunately, owing to the complexity of the rules governing the various facilities and compensatory systems, developing countries lacked the wherewithal to resort to the strategy adopted by the United States.

5. Developing countries faced specific problems to which special attention needed to be paid at the current juncture if the painful impact of the recent events on developing countries and on development prospects was to be attenuated. The international community was liable to shift its attention away from countries that were not at the centre of the current crisis and presented no danger to the system. Events had shown that policy prevailed over economics and that the initiative of Governments was decisive. Indeed, dire consequences had been avoided not through market forces but through the injection of liquidity, which amounted to a policy decision. Yet the least advanced countries must not be forgotten, and priorities must not cease to be priorities because of the new urgencies. The best way to avoid those pitfalls was to debate the question in public.

6. The current situation afforded the international community a number of opportunities for action worth considering. The first one was the International Conference on Financing for Development. The second was the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization to held in Doha, Qatar, in November 2001. It would provide the opportunity to show that the negotiations would include development issues. Yet, knowing that the multilateral trading system had interests that were at variance with those of development, it would be unrealistic to believe that during the new round of negotiations those interests would be set aside in favour of development. He hoped, however, that development would be among the major issues addressed in the negotiations.

7. While there had been considerable progress in the positions expressed so far in speeches, negotiators continued to follow the same approach and their acts did not reflect their words. Since 1994, no least developed country had successfully negotiated its

accession to WTO, although that could have been done had the rules been more flexible. There was considerable resistance to the objectives of liberalizing the agriculture, textiles and other sensitive sectors and to according identical treatment to subsidies on both agricultural and industrial exports. Efforts should therefore be redoubled in order to ensure that hopes were not dashed at the Doha Conference.

8. However, the trade negotiations should not be expected to resolve all the outstanding issues; at best, they could offer new opportunities which developing countries could only seize if they had the requisite capacities, which they still did not have. Clearly, the future of developing countries did not depend solely on trade negotiations.

9. In view of the political realignment that was currently taking place in the world, there was no telling what the world would look like in two years; however, the major changes that had occurred had created the most propitious conditions in 50 years. The main lesson to be learned from the tragic events of 11 September was that the world was made up of interdependent countries and that no country could achieve peace, security and prosperity on its own. The problems of human security — personal, food and economic security — could not be resolved without solidarity. International cooperation and the capacity of governments to take action must be strengthened. While the current climate gave no cause to rejoice, it offered unprecedented prospects which should be seized.

Agenda item 98: Environment and sustainable development

(f) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (A/56/385)

10. **Mr. Cutajar** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) said that the upcoming session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Marrakesh, Morocco, would show the importance of maintaining multilateral cooperation. In that regard, he paid tribute to the Moroccan Government for its decision to go ahead with the Conference despite the unsettled international environment. The Conference would provide an opportunity not only to advance the strategy relating to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol by building on the progress achieved in Bonn, but also to focus on the African dimension of climate change, since Africa remained the continent most beset by poverty and the one most vulnerable to climate change.

11. The agreement reached in Bonn represented a significant political breakthrough because it helped to overcome the obstacles to the negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol and to implement the measures provided for under the Framework Convention itself, especially in the area of finance and technology, in order to support the efforts of developing countries. The main task of the Conference of the Parties would be to reach agreement on issues relating to the Kyoto Protocol, make proposals designed to get many more industrialized countries to ratify it so that it could enter into force possibly in time for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg.

12. There was no doubt that the United States withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol negotiations had worked to the detriment of the agreement reached in Bonn, and the situation was not likely to change at the Marrakesh Conference. Consequently, developments with regard to the climate strategy outlined in the Protocol would depend directly on the political will of other industrialized countries, which were not countries in transition, to determine the extent to which they would translate their commitments under the Protocol into actual reductions in their greenhouse gas emissions, as well as on the efficacy of their own development mechanisms. In the absence of demand from the main potential actor, the market for negotiable emission rights created by the Kyoto Protocol was also dependent on that political will. The Conference of the Parties should try to find a way to ensure that, after the Marrakesh Conference, priority was again given to encouraging all parties, particularly the United States, to participate in a truly effective global strategy.

13. He also wished to stress the importance of the synergy between the three Rio Conventions, namely, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Three "horizontal" initiatives followed from that synergy: firstly, the possibility of creating a joint group to provide liaison between the three conventions which would include the secretariat as well as the Bureaux, in order to ensure that the three political processes were managed in an integrated fashion; secondly, the efforts made by the three secretariats, with the help of the

Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, to strengthen cooperation between the national liaison bodies of the three conventions, especially with regard to the assessment of capacity-building requirements; and thirdly, the decision of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to prepare a technical report on the scientific linkages between the three fields covered by those conventions.

14. The issue raised in document A/56/385 was an administrative one: the institutional linkage between the Convention secretariat and the United Nations, bearing in mind the necessary autonomy of the secretariat, given its geographical location (Bonn), and the responsibility of the Executive Secretary vis-à-vis the Secretary-General and the Conference of the Parties. That arrangement was working quite well because it provided administrative and operational linkage and enabled the secretariat to be kept abreast of the General Assembly debates on sustainable development. That was why the Executive Secretary, as well as the Secretary-General, recommended that the General Assembly should approve the continuation of the current arrangement for a further five-year period.

Agenda item 103: Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) (A/C.2/56/L.5)

15. **Mr. Tootoonchian** (Islamic Republic of Iran) introducing, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the draft resolution on implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, said that, in a world in which scientific and technological progress was paramount, poverty remained a serious problem for mankind. In the view of the Group of 77 and China, poverty constituted the most widespread violation of human rights and of the right to development. They therefore felt that the struggle against the scourge of poverty should be a priority objective of national strategies and of international cooperation. Consequently, the draft resolution that was before the Committee provided for a number of specific measures to accelerate world economic growth and social development. In addition to the efforts of developing countries, the assistance and cooperation of the international community, including the mobilization of resources and the creation of a favourable environment, were essential to the strengthening of economic growth. The draft resolution underscored the importance of international trade and of reform of the international financial system, as well as the need for developed countries to meet all their commitments, especially with regard to the debt-relief initiative. The draft resolution also provided for the creation of a world solidarity fund for poverty eradication, bearing in mind the need to make up for the shortfall of resources allocated to anti-poverty programmes and the quite favourable response of the international community to that idea. In conclusion, he invited the Committee to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.